

MYSTERY

# MYSTERIES

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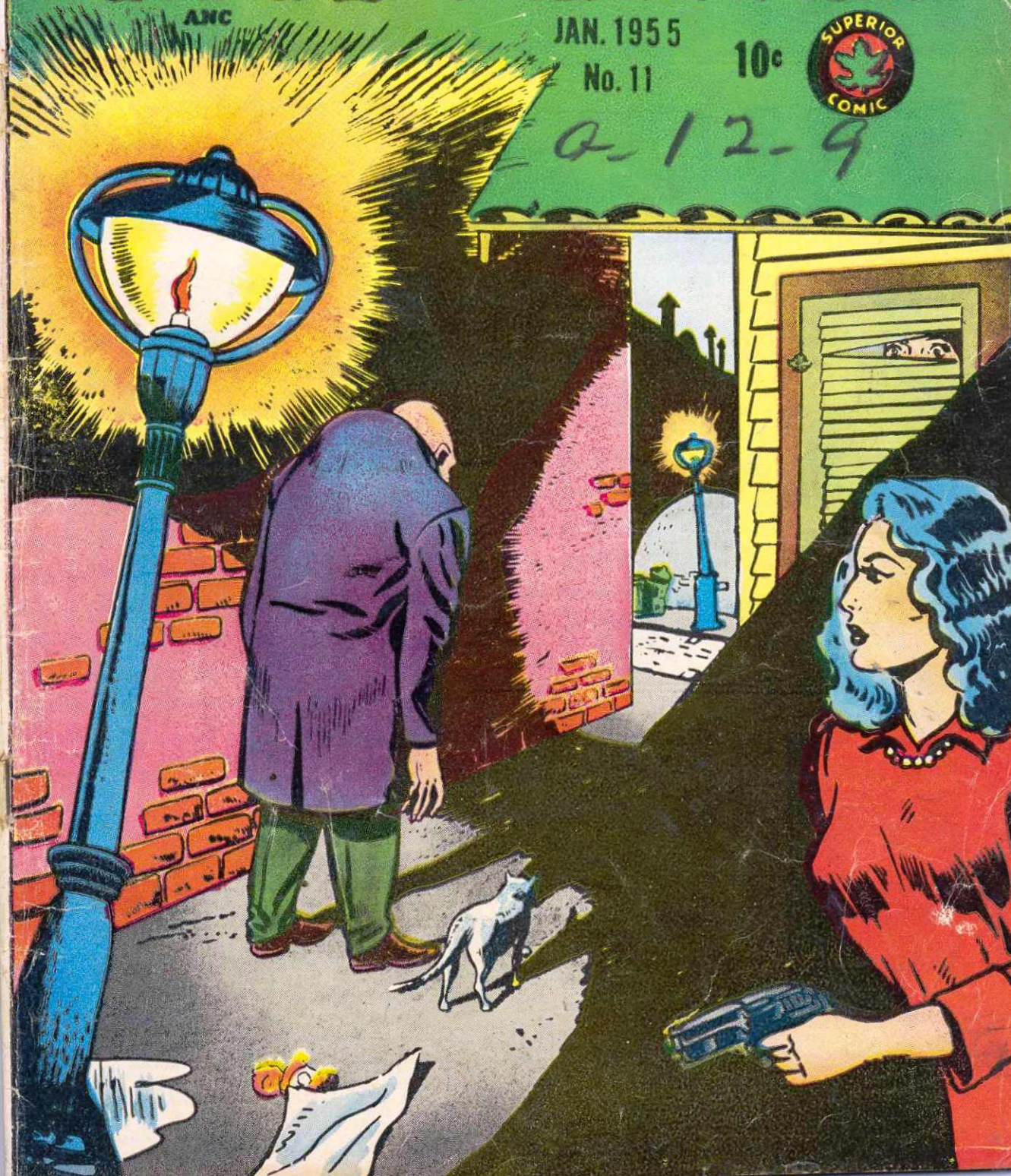
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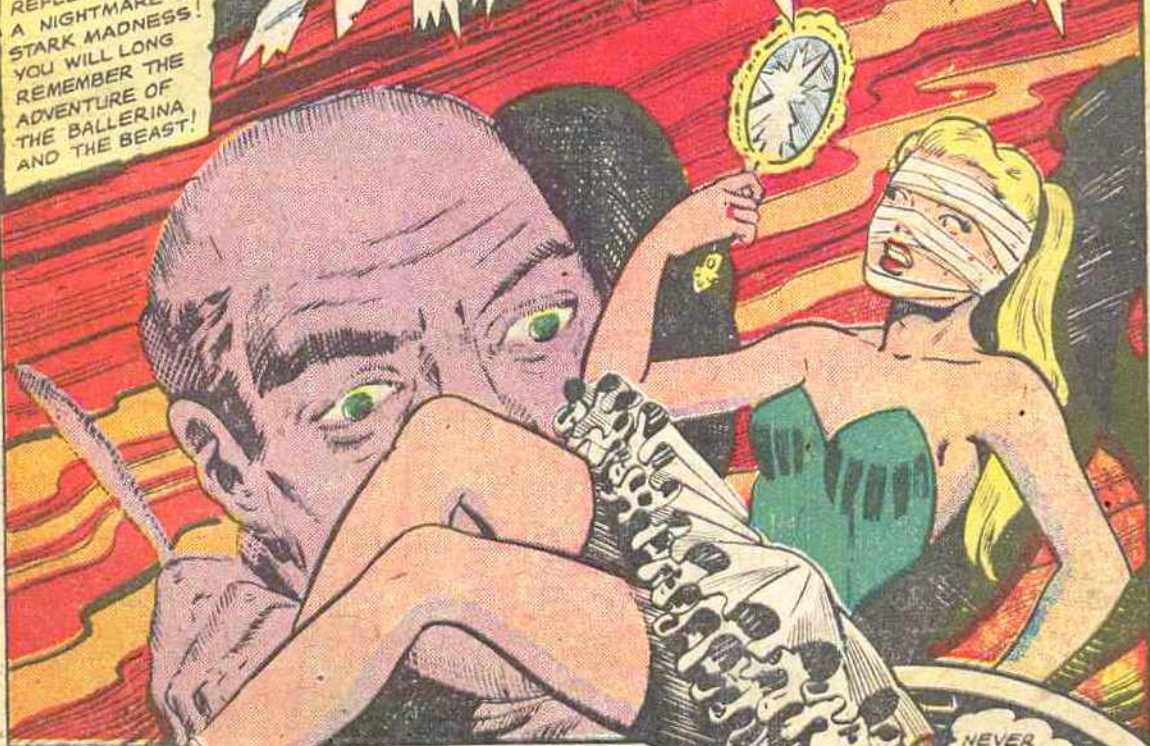
## FREE 5 DAY TRIAL

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# The BROKEN MIRROR

EVER DANCE WAS  
A VISION OF  
BEAUTY, BUT ITS  
REFLECTION WAS  
A NIGHTMARE OF  
STARK MADNESS!  
YOU WILL LONG  
REMEMBER THE  
ADVENTURE OF  
THE BALLERINA  
AND THE BEAST!



EACH NIGHT AS GLENDA WEST  
GRACED THE STAGE WITH HER  
FLAWLESS RHYTHM, THE  
BROODING EYES OF A  
FAMOUS SURGEON  
DWELLED IN STRANGE  
RAPTURE...

AFTER EACH  
PERFORMANCE, HE  
LINGERED IN THE  
SHADOWS NEAR THE  
STAGE DOOR...

NEVER  
EVEN A  
GLANCE IN MY  
DIRECTION. SOME-  
DAY, MY DEAR, OUR  
RELATIONSHIP  
WILL BE DIFFERENT...

TONIGHT SHE IS  
MORE BEAUTIFUL  
THAN EVER...





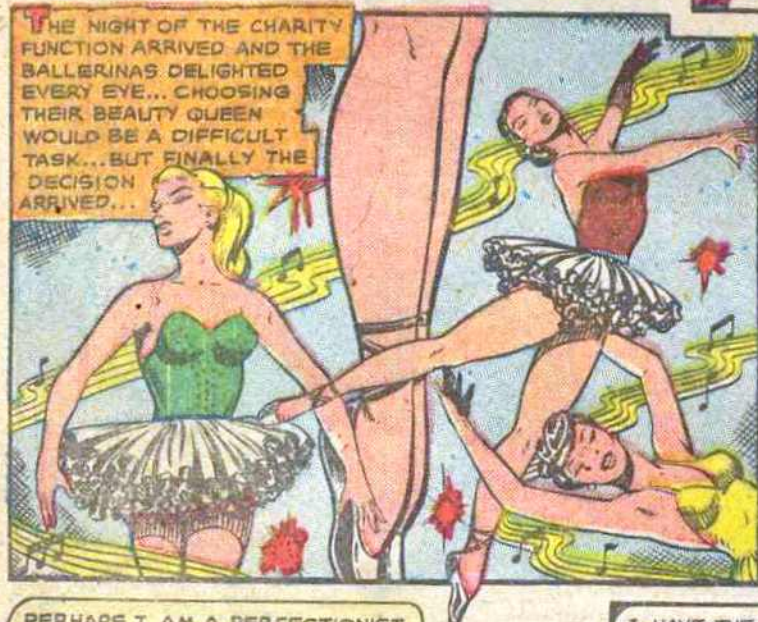
THE DAY WHEN GLENDA WEST WAS TO MEET THE MAN WHO WOULD CHANGE THE WHOLE PATTERN OF HER LIFE WAS NOT FAR AWAY... DOCTOR HILL WAS A NOTED PLASTIC SURGEON, BUT HIS SPARE TIME WAS SPENT READING, NOT MEDICAL BOOKS, BUT THE REVIEWS ON GLENDA'S LATEST SHOWS...



HELLO. YES, THIS IS DOCTOR HILL. WHAT'S THIS? JOIN A COMMITTEE TO SELECT THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BALLERINA? I'D BE HONORED, SIR! ONLY BECAUSE THE PROCEEDS OF YOUR SOCIETY GO TO CHARITY, NATURALLY... FINE... I'LL DO IT GLADLY!



THE NIGHT OF THE CHARITY FUNCTION ARRIVED AND THE BALLERINAS DELIGHTED EVERY EYE... CHOOSING THEIR BEAUTY QUEEN WOULD BE A DIFFICULT TASK... BUT FINALLY THE DECISION ARRIVED...



I SAY, HILL, WHAT HAVE YOU AGAINST THAT LITTLE WEST GIRL? WE FEEL SHE'S THE WINNER!

I DON'T AGREE, GENTLEMEN!



PERHAPS I AM A PERFECTIONIST, BUT I SEE HER FACE AS A MULTITUDE OF FLAWS! I GIVE MY VOTE TO MARGO HOWE, AND THAT'S FINAL!

PERHAPS YOU'RE RIGHT, DOCTOR! MARGO IS LOVELY...



I HAVE THE PLEASURE TO ANNOUNCE THE BEAUTY-QUEEN... MISS MARGO HOWE! YOU ALMOST WON, MISS WEST... BUT NOT QUITE... HOWEVER, CONGRATULATIONS TO MISS HOWE!

ALMOST...

ME? GRACIOUS! THAT'S WONDERFUL!





THE DOCTOR HAD APPLIED A WILD GAMBLE ON HIS DECISION THE NIGHT THE BALLERINA QUEEN WAS CHOSEN... BUT HE WON... WITH TREMBLING HEART HE LISTENED TO HIS PLOT BEING FULFILLED...



YES, I'LL SEE MISS WEST, NURSE. PLEASE ASK HER TO COME IN...



THIS IS A SURPRISE, MISS WEST! WHAT BRINGS SUCH A LOVELY GIRL TO VISIT A PLASTIC SURGEON?

OH, DOCTOR HILL, IT WAS SO KIND OF YOU TO SEE ME WITHOUT AN APPOINTMENT... I HAD TO SEE YOU...

I KNOW IT DOESN'T SEEM NICE, BUT I MANAGED TO FIND OUT YOU WERE THE ONE WHO OUTVOTED ME, DOCTOR. I'M NOT VAIN, BUT I THINK THIS WILL AFFECT MY CAREER...

I REALIZE IT MUST HAVE BEEN A BLOW TO YOU, MY DEAR. BUT IT WAS THE TRUTH!



NATURALLY I DIDN'T MEAN TO AFFECT YOUR CAREER, BUT THE TRUTH IS YOU DO HAVE A SERIOUS CHIN MALFORMATION! I'M SURPRISED YOU WERE NEVER AWARE OF HOW MUCH IT SHOWS UP FROM THE STAGE!



IT DOES! YOU MEAN ENOUGH TO DISTRACT FROM MY DANCING? C- COULD YOU HELP ME, DOCTOR?

IF YOU WISH, CALL ME IN A FEW DAYS AND I'LL MAKE PREPARATIONS TO CONSIDER YOUR CASE...



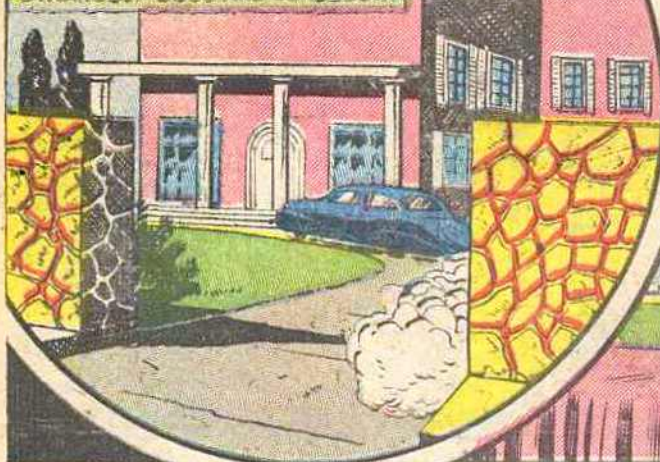
A STAGE WAS SET FOR GLENDA WEST THAT WAS AS MACABRE AS ANY PERFORMER WAS TO GRACE...

SO WE FINALLY MEET, GLENDA! AND WE SHALL SEE A GREAT DEAL OF EACH OTHER FROM NOW ON... MORE THAN YOU COULD EVER DREAM OF!





**D**OCTOR HILL'S PRIVATE HOSPITAL WAS LOCATED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN. IT WAS LOVELY AND QUIET... BUT THE MORNING GLENDA WEST ARRIVED SEEMED STRANGELY COOL AND SUNLESS.



THIS IS YOUR ROOM, MISS WEST, AND I'VE BEEN ASSIGNED TO KEEP YOU HAPPY WHILE YOU VISIT WITH US...

I'LL SEE YOU LATER, MISS WEST.

THANK YOU...



NO MIRRORS! STRANGE...HOW COME?

THE DOCTOR WANTS YOU TO FORGET YOUR OLD FACE... IT'LL HELP YOU TO BE PLEASED WITH YOUR NEW ONE AFTER YOUR OPERATION!



OH, GOOD AFTERNOON! YOU MUST BE DOCTOR GREY WHOM THE SURGEON SPOKE OF! I'M JUST KEEPING UP WITH MY DIARY...

I AM. AND WELCOME! I'LL BE WITH YOU DURING YOUR OPERATION...



NOW DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT A THING, DEAR...

I'LL CONFESS I WAS WORRIED... BUT SOMEHOW DOCTOR GREY MADE ME FEEL BETTER...



THIS WILL BE COMPLETELY PAINLESS, MY DEAR. YOU RELAX AND WE'LL HAVE YOU ASLEEP IN NO TIME...

I'M RIGHT HERE, MISS WEST...





**T**IME CEASED  
TO MATTER...  
THE PAIN  
BENEATH HER  
BANDAGED  
FACE CAME  
AND WENT...  
SURGEON HILL  
GAVE HIS  
PATIENT EVERY  
ATTENTION...  
FOR NOW  
SHE WAS  
MORE THAN  
HIS IDOL...  
SHE WAS  
HIS VICTIM!



YOU'LL BE COMING TO SOON,  
MY LITTLE ONE... AND SLOWLY  
I WILL TEACH YOU TO LOVE  
ME AS I DO YOU

SHE'S WAKING UP.  
I'LL STAY WITH HER,  
NURSE, YOU  
MAY GO

ALL RIGHT,  
DOCTOR...



DOCTOR GREY,  
DON'T LEAVE ME...  
DON'T GO...



IT'S ALL RIGHT,  
GLENDA... YOU'RE  
COMING OUT OF  
THE ANESTHESIA...  
DON'T BE  
FRIGHTENED...

BUT I AM! I'M  
FRIGHTENED OF  
SOMETHING...  
SOMETHING!



SO MY LITTLE  
PATIENT IS  
AWAKE! FINE...

YES, DOCTOR... WHY  
DID YOU SEND  
DOCTOR GREY  
AWAY? LET SOME-  
ONE STAY WITH ME...  
YOU STAY... I'M  
AFRAID TO BE  
ALONE JUST  
NOW...



DAYS PASSED IN  
DRONING MONOTONY...  
DOCTOR HILL WAS  
LAVISH IN ATTENTION,  
AND IN A HIGHLY  
PROFESSIONAL  
MANNER, SO WAS  
DOCTOR GREY...

WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT  
MY DIARY FOR COMFORT? I  
FEEL SO DIFFERENT LATELY...  
BUT I KNOW WHY... I'VE FALLEN  
IN LOVE... YES,  
I LOVE MY  
DOCTOR,  
IT'S TRUE...



HELLO, DOCTOR...  
I WAS JUST THINKING  
ABOUT YOU... I OWE  
YOU SO MUCH...

WELL, YOU  
SOUND  
CHEERFUL  
TODAY, MY  
DEAR!



DOCTOR HILL CAUGHT THE SOFTNESS IN GLENDA'S VOICE AND SAW THE SMILE BENEATH HER BANDAGED FACE... BUT ALSO HE SAW HER SMALL HAND DROP TO COVER THE PAGE SHE HAD BEEN SO BUSILY WRITING...



MISS BLAKE, I THINK A LITTLE SUNSHINE MIGHT DO OUR PATIENT A LOT OF GOOD! WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I AGREE WITH YOU, DOCTOR! SHE'S BEEN COOPED UP IN HER ROOM FOR DAYS!



I FEEL WONDERFUL... BUT A LITTLE SHAKY!

TODAY'S YOUR BIG DAY, HONEY! WE'LL BE TAKING OFF THOSE BANDAGES IN A FEW HOURS!



WHAT A CAD I AM... IT WAS HER DIARY... WHAT'S THIS? "I CAN'T HELP MYSELF... I'VE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH MY DOCTOR... IF ONLY I HAD THE COURAGE TO TELL HIM..."



GLENDA! WHAT HAVE I DONE? I'VE RUINED EVERYTHING! I MUST THINK... NO! NO TIME FOR THAT... I MUST OPERATE... IMMEDIATELY!



SAY, WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND HERE? YOU'RE ALL MOVING AROUND LIKE THE PLACE WAS ON FIRE!

IT MIGHT AS WELL BE! HAVEN'T YOU HEARD? DOCTOR HILL IS OPERATING ON MISS WEST AGAIN! IMMEDIATELY!



STEP OUTSIDE, PLEASE, NURSES. I WANT TO SPEAK TO DOCTOR HILL PRIVATELY...

GREY! I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU! I CAN USE YOU... GO AND SCRUB, WILL YOU, MAN...



THERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE COLD FIERCENESS OF YOUNG DOCTOR GREY'S TONE AS HE MOVED TOWARD THE SURGEON THREATENINGLY.

WHAT SORT OF BUSINESS ARE YOU COOKING UP NOW? THAT GIRL DOESN'T NEED ANOTHER OPERATION AND YOU KNOW IT!

DON'T TOUCH ME, GREY! I TELL YOU I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING! SHE **MUST** HAVE THIS OPERATION!

IF YOU WON'T ASSIST ME, DON'T INTERFERE, OR I'LL KILL YOU! I LOVE GLENDA AND I'VE RUINED HER FACE... BUT THERE'S STILL TIME TO REMEDY THAT... SHE'LL NEVER KNOW...

BUT THEIR RAISED VOICES BROUGHT FORTH A CURIOUS EAVESDROPPER... GLENDA WEST HEARD HER NAME MENTIONED, AND...

**RUINED** MY FACE! WHAT DOES HE MEAN?

YOU COULD GET LIFE FOR THIS, YOU FIEND!

I WANT LIFE... LIFE WITH HER! AND I'LL HAVE IT AT ANY COST!

NURSE, WHAT'S WRONG IN THERE? WHAT ARE THEY SAYING?

BACK TO YOUR ROOM, YOUNG LADY! THIS MINUTE!

AFTER RETURNING TO HER QUARTERS, GLENDA SUDDENLY REALIZED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ALL SHE HAD OVERHEARD... THE MIRROR FELL FROM HER HAND... AND FOR AN INSTANT SHE SANK TO THE FLOOR WEAK WITH HORROR...

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME?  
WHAT HAVE THEY DONE? I  
MUST THINK... THINK...

MISS WEST! WHERE ARE YOU GOING? COME BACK HERE! YOU CAN'T RUN OFF LIKE THAT! STOP HER, SOMEONE!



THE CLATTER OF GLENDA'S RACING WHEELS AND THE SCREAMS OF THE NURSES SENT A STARTLING MESSAGE TO DOCTOR GREY... HE SPRANG INTO SUDDEN ACTION...

BLAST YOU, HILL, THIS IS ALL I HAVE TIME FOR NOW! JUST ENOUGH TO PUT YOU OUT OF THE WAY FOR THE MOMENT!

DON'T, YOU FOOL... OHNH...

WHERE DID SHE GO? DID SOMEONE STOP HER?

NO, DOCTOR! SHE RAN LIKE A DEER! WHAT SHALL WE DO?



GLENDA! STOP! DON'T RUN OFF! LET ME TALK TO YOU!



DON'T BE A LITTLE FOOL, GLENDA! I'M GOING TO CUT YOU OFF! SLOW DOWN... I'M HEADING DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF YOU! I'M WARNING YOU...



GO AWAY... I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO ANYONE... D-DON'T LOOK AT ME...





**F**RIGHTENED AND WEAKENED INTO SUBMISSION, GLENDA WEST NO LONGER FOUGHT AGAINST THE FATE THAT AWAITED HER... SOON SHE WAS IN HER ROOM AGAIN LISTENING IN PANIC TO THE PROFESSIONAL VOICES OVER HER...



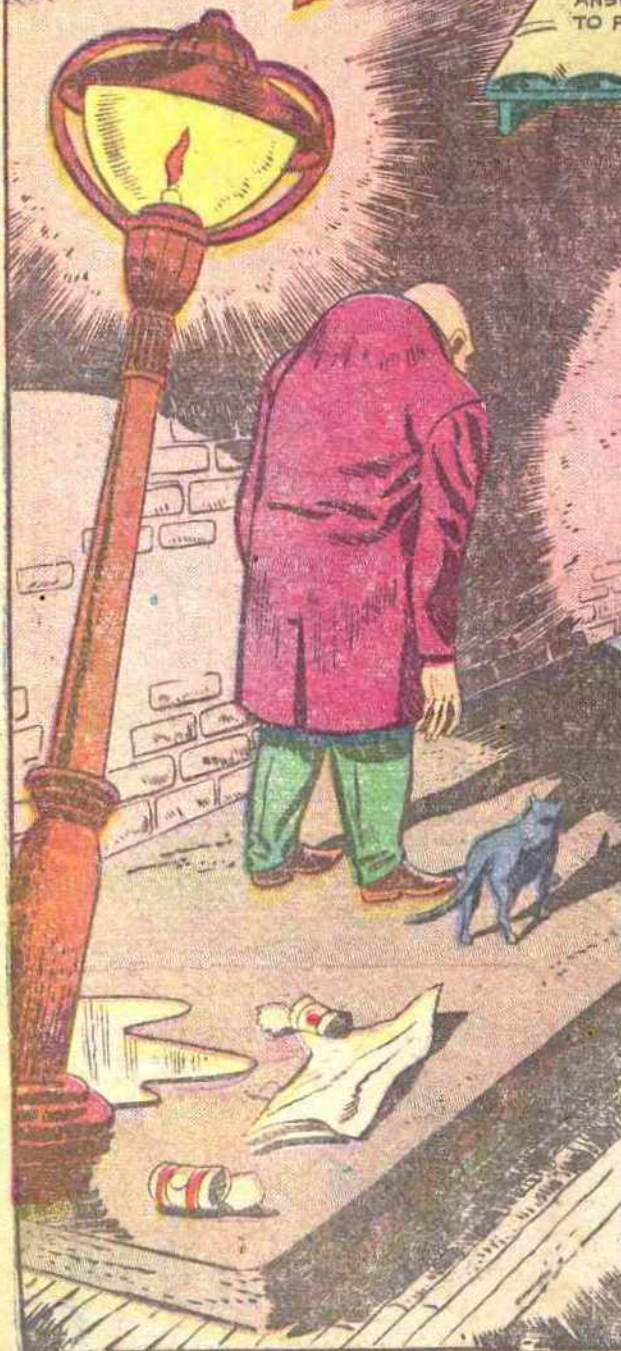
**T**HE DRAMA CAME TO A CLOSE... ONLY ONE REMAINED ON THE STAGE... A SOBBING, SHUDDERING CHARACTER WHO PLAYED HIS PART LIKE FIEND AND FOOL... WHO PLACED DESIRE ABOVE REASON, AND WICKEDNESS ABOVE MERCY, BUT WHOSE PLOT WAS SHATTERED TO PIECES LIKE THE FRAGMENTS OF THE BROKEN MIRROR...





# MIDNIGHT PROWLER

EACH NIGHT HE MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE SHADOWS... WHAT WAS HIS GHOSTLY MISSION? HIS LITTLE JADE-EYED COMPANION KNEW THE ANSWER TO THE MYSTERY... WOULD YOU LIKE TO FOLLOW HIM DOWN THE DARKENED STREETS?



THERE'S THAT OLD MAN AGAIN! I THINK HE'S DANGEROUS! WHAT ON EARTH DOES HE SEARCH FOR?

WHO KNOWS? HE'S JUST A LITTLE DAFT, THAT'S ALL!

**W**AS OLD JONAS PALMER DANGEROUS? WAS HE DAFT? LET'S EXAMINE THIS OLD MAN CLOSER...



THAT'S RIGHT, LITTLE FRIEND, KEEP LOOKING... WE'VE GOT TO FIND IT... GOT TO!









IN THE SHADOWY BLACKNESS, THE THIEVING PAIR PAUSE WITH THE AWARENESS OF ANOTHER'S PRESENCE...



SILENTLY MRS. PETERS' BODY SLUMPED AGAINST THE CHEST SHE HAD SO COVETED, AND ITS WEIGHT SWUNG OPEN THE LARGEST TRICK DOOR... GROTESQUELY SHE TUMBLED IN AND THE DOOR QUICKLY SHUT...





**J**ONAS CLICKED A LIGHT SWITCH AND STOOD FACING THE SMOKING GUN... HE HEARD THE THREATENING WORDS, BUT ABOVE THOSE SNARLING VOICES, ANOTHER SOUND REMAINED CRYSTAL CLEAR IN HIS BRAIN... THAT SNAP OF THE SECRET DOOR...



DON'T MAKE A SOUND, POP, OR WE'LL SILENCE YOU PERMANENTLY!

OPEN THAT CHEST AND HAND OVER THE BEACON RUBY, PAL, THEN YOU WON'T GET HURT!

DON'T SHOOT ME, GENTLEMEN! I - I CAN'T OPEN THE CHEST.. I SOLD IT TO MRS PETERS! THE KEY IS IN HER POSSESSION... I WAS TO RETRIEVE MY JEWEL WHEN I DELIVERED THE CHEST TO HER!



I KNOW THAT SOUNDS LIKE A STRANGE ARRANGEMENT, BUT IT WAS MY GUARANTEE TO HER THAT THE CHEST WOULD TRULY BE SOLD TO HER!

WHERE DOES THIS DAME LIVE, POP? WE'RE GOING VISITING!



WE'LL DELIVER THE CHEST FOR YOU... THEN SHE CAN OPEN IT! COME ON... MOVE!

HER ADDRESS... I MUST LOOK IT UP!



**J**ONAS WAS GAMBLING... HE KNEW A BODY WAS IN THE CHEST... IF HE GUESSED CORRECTLY, IT WAS MRS. PETERS... IF HE WAS WRONG, HE WAS AT LEAST LEADING THE THIEVES TO WHERE HE WOULD RECEIVE HELP.

HAVING THAT TRUCK WITH US WAS JUST PLAIN LUCK!

PLEASE BE CAREFUL, IT'S A PRICELESS CHEST...



**P**ACING NERVOUSLY BACK AND FORTH BEFORE HIS MASTER'S SHOP OF ANTIQUES, SATAN WATCHES THE TRUCK WITH ITS GRIM SECRET, VANISH FROM SIGHT...





MR. PETERS QUICKLY OPENED THE DOOR TO ADMIT THE STRANGE VISITORS... HIS EYES WORE THE ANXIOUS LOOK OF ONE WHO IS WAITING... JONAS FELT A CHILL FOR THE SHOCK AWAITING THIS MAN...



YOUR WIFE BOUGHT THIS CHEST FROM OLD MAN PALMER AND WE DELIVERED IT! WHAT'S SO EXCITING ABOUT THAT?

BUT AT THIS HOUR OF THE NIGHT! WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND HERE?

I THOUGHT YOU REFUSED TO SELL THAT CHEST TO MY WIFE! THAT'S WHAT SHE TOLD ME...

I DID REFUSE, BUT IT SEEMS THAT SHE WAS VERY DETERMINED TO GET IT!



IF IT'S HERE, SHE BOUGHT IT! NOW CALL HER, WE WANT THAT KEY!

AS A MATTER OF FACT, SHE ISN'T HOME! I WAS WAITING FOR HER WHEN YOU ARRIVED!



NOT HOME, EH? WELL, PALMER, WHAT DO WE DO NOW? STAND ASIDE, I'LL SHOOT THAT DOOR OPEN!

WAIT, GENTLEMEN! THE LADY IS HOME! I'LL SHOW YOU...



AGNES! WHAT HAPPENED TO HER?

THAT SHOT! YOU MUST HAVE KILLED HER!

SHUT UP, YOU FOOL!



GO TO THE PHONE, MR. PALMER AND CALL THE POLICE! IF EITHER OF YOU TWO THUGS MOVE A MUSCLE, I'LL SHOOT! PUT YOUR HANDS UP WHERE I CAN WATCH THEM!



UNTIL HE SATISFIED THE POLICE WITH AN EXPLANATION OF HIS PART IN THE GRIM MURDER, JONAS WAS HELD AT THE POLICE STATION... BUT FINALLY HE WAS FREED...



I'LL HAVE THAT CHEST SENT BACK TO YOUR SHOP FOR YOU, MR. PALMER... IF YOU STILL WANT IT AFTER THIS...

OH, I WANT IT... I MOST DEFINITELY WANT IT...



AND FINALLY LIFE SEEMED TO RESUME ITS NORMAL PACE...

THEY BROUGHT OUR CHEST BACK, LITTLE SATAN! SHALL WE TAKE A LOOK AT OUR RUBY?

WITH TREMBLING FINGERS, JONAS OPENED THE SMALL SECRET DRAWER... THEN HE STARED IN HORROR AND DISBELIEF...



GONE!  
IT'S GONE!



IT MUST HAVE FALLEN OUT THE REAR PANEL AS THE TRUCK JOUNCED ALONG TOWARD THE PETERS' HOUSE! I'VE GOT TO FIND IT! MY WHOLE LIFE'S EARNINGS! I MUST FIND IT...



THERE'S THAT OLD MAN AGAIN! HE MAKES ME NERVOUS! WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE HE'S LOOKING FOR?

I CAN'T IMAGINE! HE'S BEEN PROWLING AROUND LIKE THAT FOR MONTHS MUTTERING AWAY TO HIS CAT! JUST A LITTLE DAFT, THAT'S ALL!

BUT ONE NIGHT...

NO SIGN OF OLD MAN PALMER TONIGHT! I GUESS HE MUST HAVE ENDED UP IN AN ASYLUM!

ASYLUM NOTHING! I WAS JUST READING ABOUT HIM! IT SEEMS HE FURNISHED PROOF OF OWNERSHIP AT THE POLICE STATION TODAY FOR A HUGE RUBY! THEY FOUND IT MONTHS AGO A FEW FEET AWAY FROM AN ANTIQUE SHOP HE USED TO OWN!



The End



# GRIM WEDDING DAY

By John Martin

**G**RANT STEEDHOLM shivered as he stood with Parks in the big old barn down at the end of Summer's Lane. Old and dry, the constable watched him and chuckled thinly.

"Yes, there's more than men to be afraid of, Mr. Steedholm." He glanced down at the silent remains of Steedholm's old housekeeper, Jinny Franks.

*More than men to be afraid of*, Steedholm thought to himself. What could that mean? He knew what it had to mean. The superstitious country folk were ready to attribute Jinny's mysterious death to goblins or evil spirits. The valley was full of superstition, although up to now it hadn't mattered to him. But even he had wondered...

He glanced again at Jinny, and her dark, evil face was composed. Only he knew what evil really lay behind the mask. It had been a perfect mask for Jinny. The country folk, simple and yet deeply wise, were not fools enough to assume a woman was bad just because she looked that way. And so, Steedholm reflected, they had shown themselves even greater fools by ignoring nature's plainest warning signals. Yes, Jinny was evil, almost as evil as he was himself. Steedholm, shaken though he was, laughed inwardly. He, himself, looked like a gentle country squire. And that was another mask. Behind it lay the perfectly sincere desire to be one and also the will to use evil to stay one.

"What I can't understand is why there isn't a mark on her," he said to Parks.

"Why, that's the best proof that the dark powers got her, Mr. Steedholm. Oh, you folks from the city can laugh at us and say we're just gullible, but there's a power none of you know of what goes on in the air right around you—and particularly at night. Evil, Mr. Steedholm, evil. Jinny wasn't much, but they got her. They'd get us all if we didn't watch out."

"You mean a coroner's jury will literally accept a story like that?" he asked, amazed.

Parks smiled slowly. "Oh, no. They'll put it down to the usual person or persons unknown and inside, like me, they'll know who did it. But look, Mr. Steedholm, what else would they think? She's dead. Without a mark on her. We even know what killed her. Doc Spetter says it was simple heart failure. But we also know that terror killed her. Why else was she found atop the haystack outside?"

**S**TEEDHOLM considered. That, he knew, was the really inexplicable part of the

whole business. No human agency, not even Jinny herself, could have lifted her body to the top of a rather high, but otherwise very ordinary, haystack, and left her dead. And there wasn't a sign of her having climbed there herself. Not a straw disturbed. For yards around the ground was perfectly clean.

Why, why, he asked himself, and could find no answer. His own estate—the one he'd inherited from his dead wife—was hundreds of feet away. How came Jinny to be found dead in such a manner outside the house she had taken care of for him?

He moved aside as the men from the village funeral parlor came in and took Jinny away. He regretted seeing her go. Last night had been the last time he'd seen her. It had been her habit to walk down toward the grave where his wife lay buried and glance down at it and chuckle deeply. And, presumably, she had done the same last night. Only she had never come back. Steedholm tried to imagine her strolling past the mound of earth with Dorothy's headstone at one end of it and overhead the great elms, forever a roof over dead memories. Yes, he regretted losing Jinny. It had been Jinny, after all, who had helped him lose Dorothy.

In deep thought, he absently thanked old Parks for his courtesy, and strolled out of old man Summer's barn and down toward his own land. The inquest would not trouble him. He could go on to marry Steena Talling now and forget the whole thing. What was a mystery like that to him, even if it had lost him a companion in what amounted to murder?

*Amounted to murder*. Abruptly, he paused and considered. Dorothy had died without a mark on her, either, but he knew what had killed her. His own and Jinny's unkindness, their calculated mental pressure that had finally exhausted her will to live. An invalid like Dorothy had little to begin with. And he had married her, hoping she would die soon. Later, he had realized that if he wanted to enjoy her fortune without hindrance, her death, in a measure, had to be hastened. And then had begun Dorothy's virtual captivity. Bereft of authority, badgered by her own husband and her own housekeeper, yet forced to hide what went on behind a false mask of good cheer, his wife's crippled spirit had given up quickly. And they had buried her as she wished to be buried, under the stand of elms, beside her father and her mother, to sleep forever as the last of a great old family.



THE SKY darkened a little as a wrack of clouds passed before the late evening sun. He turned in his own lane and came to a stop before Dorothy's grave. Yes, it was murder, he supposed, though no man on God's green earth could ever prove it. A grim, hard smile appeared on his face as he realized that with satisfaction, and then the fact of Jinny's death smote him with sudden force. What if the villagers were right, he thought. What if Dorothy herself had risen up out of her own grave to visit revenge on Jinny?

He paused in his stride. He was very close to the grave now. A chill breeze ran under the elms and, all of a sudden, his courage deserted him. He felt like a small boy walking past a cemetery at night, certain that close behind him horror trod, or, at the very least, lay in wait for him behind the nearest gravestone.

And, like a small boy, like any grown man, confronted with terror he did not understand and with murder on his conscience, Steedholm began to whistle. He thought it would keep up his courage.

He stopped when he came in sight of the grave. The cold sweat that had begun to roll down his forehead dried up. Grant Steedholm smiled in relief. He needed nothing to keep up his courage now, for the grave was undisturbed. Over the gentle, slow-rising mound, the green grass grew as it always had, and there were no tracks in the surrounding grounds.

Dorothy Steedholm, her husband knew now, lay at rest. He had nothing to fear from her departed, perturbed spirit. Whoever or whatever had killed poor Jinny, was of no concern to him. And now that he thought of it, Jinny had probably died at the hand of some unknown, bumpkin lover who would, presently, be discovered red-handed killing some other girl. In fact, he was even happy Jinny had gone. Now there was no one in the world who knew what had happened to Dorothy, beside himself.

Now, he reflected, he could marry Steena Talling in perfect safety. Dorothy had left him money. And marrying into the Talling family would bring prestige. Squire Steedholm, he murmured to himself, master of ten thousand acres, husband of the village's most beautiful and desirable woman. The wedding had been set for that evening at eight, and now, with Jinny's inexplicable death out of his mind, he could go to it with an easy heart.

LEAVING Dorothy's grave, he returned to the old mansion that was now his, reported to the servants what had happened, proclaimed a decent period of mourning for Jinny and, chuckling secretly, went upstairs

to dress. From his window he could see the roof of the big Talling house, several thousand feet off. Ah, he thought, all the land between would tonight become his.

At seven, he finished his last glass of port, called for his coat and top-hat. In an exuberant mood, he decided to walk to the Talling house, past Dorothy's grave, down past the barn on Summer's Lane where they had put poor Jinny's body for a while and then onto the grassy lane lined with cornflowers. They would be invisible now, he knew, for it was dark, but the smells of the growing things would be fragrant in his nostrils.

He left the house. Outside, the merest thread of light left by the setting sun ran like a line of blood along the horizon. Below him was the path under the elms, past the grave. Poor Dorothy, he thought, and smiled secretly. She would always be a fine memory now, a part of the mask that hid him from the world. She had been dead a year.

As he approached the grave, he lifted an arm in a final, ironical salute of farewell. Ahead of him the mound loomed mournful and dim, but he whispered: "Good-bye, my dear," and plunged ahead, whistling.

He stopped, suddenly, with a terrible jerk and screamed, as from above, a long ropey arm descended, lashing, seizing him in an iron, inexorable grip. Stark terror of the unknown ripped through him and his arms flailed out, coming to grips with what held him. What was it, he asked himself desperately—human being, wild beast or...

Then Grant Steedholm's blood froze as his fingers closed on the tangled mass that was crushing the life from him. Now he knew what had killed Jinny and what was killing him. Only one thing could strangle a woman and hurl her, senseless, aloft to fall ironically dead on a haystack. Only one thing could be remorselessly, revengefully killing him now. It was the elm that had stood beside the grave—and now its stiff muscles flexed in an ecstasy of hate and triumph. Its roots, he guessed, breaking into the coffin, had taken for their food all the hatred and desire for revenge that had gone into the grave with Dorothy Steedholm. And now that undying hatred, in full, blind cry, was crushing out its last drop of vengeance.

Above the headstone, Grant Steedholm rose suddenly into the air, a mass of twigs, like a giant's hand, strangling air from his body. He could not see beneath him as he was catapulted with frightful speed toward the night sky, but he knew that he would hit the ground with bone-crushing force. And, in his last, dim thoughts, he knew that when he hit he would be as dead as they die.



# The WANDERING CORPSE

**W**AS THERE NO RESTING PLACE FOR THE ROAMING CADAVER? WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF HIS WEIRD JOURNEYS? DEAD MEN DO NOT TALK, BUT THIS MYSTERY ALMOST WENT UNSOLVED!



**W**EBSTER CHUMLY WAS DEAD ONLY A FEW HOURS, BUT HIS HOPEFUL RELATIVES LOST NO TIME GATHERING... THEIR GRIEF THINLY DISGUISED BENEATH THE ANTICIPATION OF HOW THE WEALTHY OLD ECCENTRIC WOULD DISTRIBUTE HIS LEGACY...



WELL, WHO IS IT, COUSIN MARTHA?

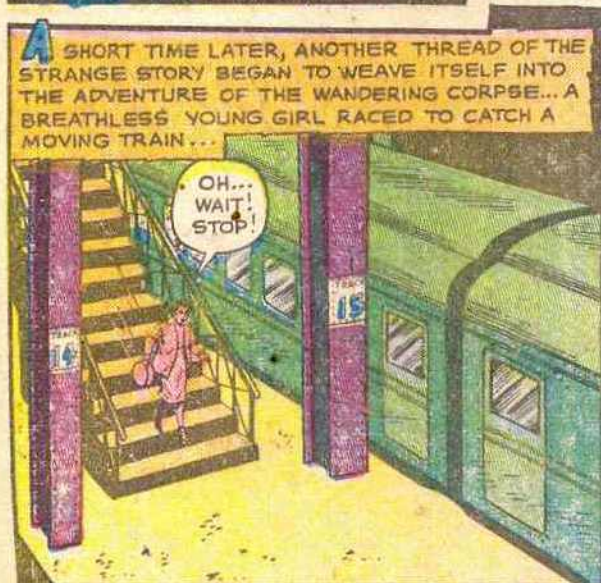
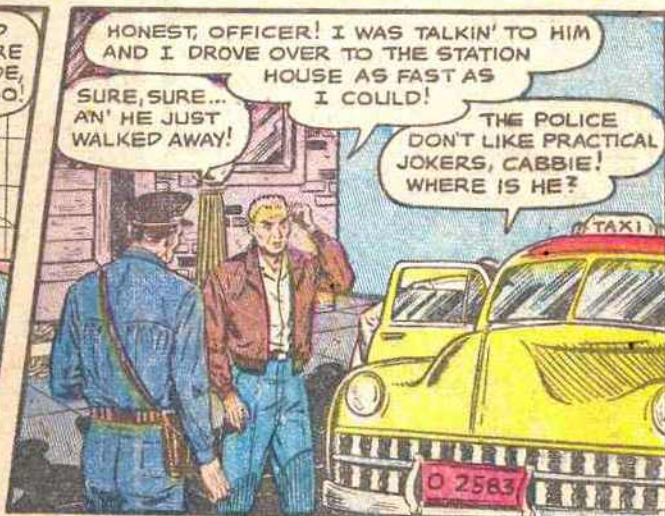
WHAT? PLEASE REPEAT THAT...

THE HOSPITAL!

I TELL YOU MR. CHUMLY'S CORPSE HAS DISAPPEARED FROM THE HOSPITAL MORGUE!... OF COURSE WE'VE LOOKED... EVERYWHERE! WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT!









...WHILE ABOARD  
THAT VERY TRAIN...

GOING TO HOPESVILLE, EH?  
THESE SLEEPING PASSENGERS  
GIVE ME A PAIN! EXPECT A  
CONDUCTOR TO BE THEIR  
PRIVATE ALARM CLOCK!

...AN  
HOUR  
LATER...

THAT'S STRANGE! BILL  
TOLD ME TO WAKE THAT  
MAN AT HOPESVILLE, AND  
HE'S GONE! MUST  
HAVE GOT OFF AT  
THE WRONG  
STATION!

... BUT ON A  
LONELY COUNTRY  
ROAD AN  
APPOINTMENT  
MADE BY  
TELEPHONE  
WAS BEING  
KEPT...

I SEE YOU FOUND MY  
WAGON OKAY, STRANGER!  
I STOPPED IN TO CHAT  
WITH A NEIGHBOR WHILE  
I WAS WAITING  
FOR YOU...

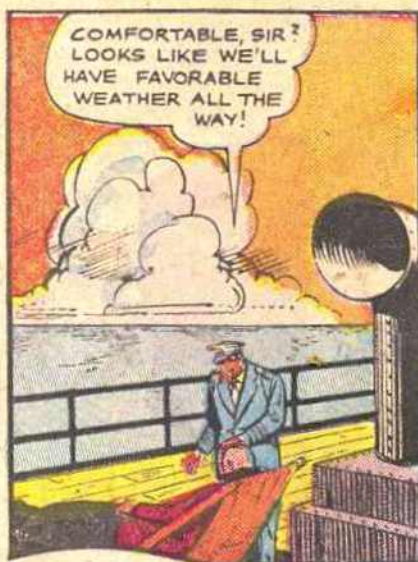
THINKIN' OF LIVIN' IN THESE  
PARTS? YOU MIGHT NOT  
LIKE IT... QUIET AS A  
CEMETERY! GOOD FARM  
LANDS THOUGH...

SAY, YOU'RE MIGHTY QUIET...  
YIII... IT'S A DEAD MAN! AN'  
ME SITTIN' HERE TALKIN'  
AWAY TO HIM!

DEAD! I—I'LL  
GIT THE SHERIFF!  
HELP! HELP!



BUT THE SHERIFF NEVER DID GET TO SEE THE DEAD MAN, FOR AGAIN HE MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED... BUT WHEN A STEAMER BOUND FOR CUBA WAS ONLY ONE HOUR OUT OF PORT, A FAMILIAR FIGURE WAS PROPPED UP ON ONE OF THE DECK CHAIRS...







THE EXAMINATION OF WEBSTER CHUMLEY REVEALED NOT ONLY THE LENGTH OF TIME HE HAD BEEN DECEASED, BUT ALSO THAT HE HAD BEEN EMBALMED!

AMAZING! BUT HOW DID HE END UP ON MY BOAT?



I'D SUGGEST THAT YOU TALK WITH THAT GIRL, SIR!

YOU'RE RIGHT! THE ENTIRE SITUATION IS MOST PECULIAR!

...AND THUS THE SAME YOUNG LADY WHO EARLIER HAD MISSED HER TRAIN, MANAGED TO CATCH A SHIP THAT WAS TO SAIL HER INTO HIGH ADVENTURE!



THIS MATTER WILL BE TURNED OVER TO THE AUTHORITIES AS SOON AS WE ARRIVE IN CUBA!

THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I EXPECTED WOULD HAPPEN!



I MUST ALSO ASK YOU TO REMAIN IN YOUR CABIN UNTIL WE GET INTO PORT...

OR IN LESS POLITE WORDS, I'M UNDER ARREST!



LATER, AS THE SILENCE OF NIGHT SETTLED OVER THE SHIP...

I CAN'T WASTE ANY MORE TIME IN HERE! BUT THIS TIME I'D BETTER CARRY MY GUN!



NO ONE ABOUT! NOW IF I CAN GET TO THE INFIRMARY WITHOUT MISHAP!



IT WOULD SEEM THAT WEBSTER CHUMLY WAS NOT YET TO REST IN PEACE! HIS CORPSE WAS STRETCHED OUT ON A TABLE MILES AWAY FROM THE PLACE WHERE HE BREATHED HIS LAST... BUT WHAT WAS TO HAPPEN NOW?



AAAAH! JUST AS I THOUGHT! THIS IS PERFECT TIMING!



TURN AROUND, CHUM! I'VE HAD A DATE WITH YOU FOR A LONG TIME!

THE LATE MR. CHUMLY HIRED ME FOR JUST THIS PURPOSE! HE WONDERED WHICH OF HIS KIN WOULD TRY TO GET AT HIS FORTUNE... IN FACT, HE ALMOST SUSPECTED IT WOULD BE YOU!



YOU WENT THROUGH A LOT OF TROUBLE HIJACKING HIS BODY, DIDN'T YOU? IT'S NOT SO EASY TO KIDNAP A CORPSE, BUT YOU DID FAIRLY WELL!

I WAS SIMPLY TRYING TO GET WHAT SHOULD RIGHTFULLY BE MY INHERITANCE!



SO OUR YOUNG LADY WAS A DETECTIVE ALL ALONG! BUT WHY DID THE GREEDY CAPTAIN NEED HIS UNCLE'S CORPSE TO GET AN INHERITANCE?

THE OLD MISER NEVER DID MAKE OUT A WILL!

I KNOW, HE HID HIS MONEY, BUT HE HAD A SMALL MAP OF ITS WHEREABOUTS TATTOOED ON HIS BACK!



HE TOLD ME THAT YOU ARRANGED FOR HIM TO HAVE THAT TATTOO, CAPTAIN! NONE OF THE OTHER RELATIVES HAD ANY KNOWLEDGE OF IT! YOU WERE MOST ANXIOUS TO GET A LOOK AT IT, WEREN'T YOU?

IT IS OUR REGRETTABLE DUTY TO PLACE YOU UNDER ARREST, CAPTAIN! BODY-SNATCHING ISN'T APPROVED OF BY LAW, YOU KNOW!



The End



# GYPSY'S CURSE

BREWED IN A CAULDRON OF BITTER REVENGE AND FLAVORED WITH THE VENOM OF BLACK RANCOR, IS A ROMANY CURSE! WOE BE TO HIM WHO SHALL BE ITS VICTIM, FOR AS WITH DEATH, THERE CAN BE NO ESCAPE FROM ITS FULL MEASURE!



GREG PETERS, FEATURED STAR AND FAMOUS SCREEN LOVER, WAS MAKING ANOTHER PICTURE AND HIS COMPANY WAS ON LOCATION IN AN AUTHENTIC GYPSY CAMP FOR ATMOSPHERE...

C'MON, GREG! PUT MORE INTO IT! YOU'VE GOT THE MOST IMPORTANT LEADING LADY OUR STUDIO CONTRACTS IN YOUR ARMS!

OKAY. LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH!



I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A FEW MINUTES, BABY! YOU JUST STAND BY!

I DON'T KNOW IF I ENJOY WATCHING YOU KISS THAT GIRL, GREG...





GREG PETERS WAS WHILING AWAY HIS TIME, BUT THE LOOK IN LUCIA'S EYES WAS DEEP AND COMPELLING... SOMEHOW SHE MANAGED TO PUT HIM AT A LOSS FOR WORDS... IT WAS LIKE TOYING WITH FIRE...

YOU'RE QUIET TONIGHT, LITTLE ONE...

MY THOUGHTS ARE OF THE FUTURE, GREG...

MY FATHER ALREADY STARTS THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR OUR MARRIAGE, YET YOU HAVEN'T SPOKEN OF IT TO ME...

MARRIAGE! WHAT ON EARTH PUT SUCH AN IDEA IN YOUR HEAD?

IDEA! IS LOVE AN IDEA TO YOU? HAVE THESE WEEKS TOGETHER BEEN A GAME TO YOU?

NOW DON'T SPOIL EVERYTHING! HAVEN'T YOU ENJOYED OUR FRIENDSHIP, TOO?

FRIENDSHIP! YOU HAVE DEFAMED MY HEART!

SO YOU HEARD HER! WELL, DON'T ASK ME WHERE YOUR DAUGHTER GOT THOSE NOTIONS OF MARRIAGE!

I HEARD NOTHING. BUT LUCIA WILL SOON DRY HER TEARS AND TELL ME WHAT I SHOULD KNOW, PETERS.

DISTINCT WARNED GREG PETERS HE WAS DEALING WITH A PROBLEM THAT COULD PROVE TROUBLESOME. WITHOUT FURTHER ADD, HE MADE A REASONABLE SUGGESTION TO JOE WILSON, FRIEND AND DIRECTOR OF HIS LATEST FILM...

LET'S GET BACK TO HOLLYWOOD, JOE! THAT LITTLE GYPSY GAL IS GETTING IN MY HAIR!

HEARTLESS BEAST! ALL THAT MATTERS TO GREG PETERS IS GREG PETERS!









GETTING BACK TO HOLLYWOOD WAS LIKE RETURNING TO CIVILIZATION... IN NO TIME THE PICTURE WAS FINISHED AND TRANQUILLITY SETTLED OVER GREG PETERS' LIFE... THE GYPSY'S CURSE SEEMED A THING OF THE FORGOTTEN PAST...





SILENCE  
CHARGED WITH  
ELECTRICITY  
SETTLED OVER  
THE TRIO AS  
HOPE CALDWELL  
STEPPED INTO  
VIEW... IT WAS  
OBVIOUS  
THAT SHE HAD  
OVERHEARD  
GREG'S  
DENOUNCEMENT...  
HER SMALL  
FACE WAS  
WHITE AND  
HER VOICE  
SHOOK WHEN  
SHE SPOKE...

WILSON, WOULD  
YOU MIND TAKING  
A STROLL? I'D  
LIKE TO SPEAK  
WITH GREG  
PRIVATELY.

CERTAINLY, MY DEAR.  
HOW CHARMING YOU  
LOOK TODAY. WELL,  
EXCUSE ME, YOU  
TWO...



I WAS JUST JOKING,  
HOPE. YOU KNOW I'M  
CRAZY ABOUT YOU!

TELL ME  
MORE,  
GREG...



I'LL LOVE  
YOU TILL I  
DIE, GREG...  
OR UNTIL  
YOU DO!

THAT'LL BE A  
FULL TIME JOB... I  
HAVE INTENTIONS  
OF BEING AROUND  
A LONG TIME!

YOU'RE SUCH A  
NAUGHTY BOY,  
GREG! I WISH I  
DIDN'T LOVE YOU SO...

THAT'S BETTER! FOR A  
MINUTE I THOUGHT YOU  
WERE REALLY ANGRY!



BUT I  
CHANGED  
YOUR PLANS,  
DIDN'T I,  
DARLING?

HOPE! Y—YOU  
STABBED ME!  
HELP... WILSON...  
HELP ME!



WHAT  
HAPPENED?  
HOPE! WHAT'S  
WRONG?

I KILLED HIM! HE'S  
ALL YOURS NOW,  
FRIEND!





...BUT HOPE CALDWELL WAS WRONG... GREG ESCAPED DEATH BY A SMALL MARGIN. THANKS TO THE QUICK THINKING OF HIS FRIEND FRONKIE, JOE WILSON, WHO PROMPTLY TELEPHONED FOR AN AMBULANCE... THEN, LATER...

IF YOU PRESS CHARGES, GREG, THAT LAST PICTURE WILL HAVE TO BE JUNKED. IT WOULD COST US ALL A FORTUNE IN MONEY AND BAD PUBLICITY!

HAVE THE POLICE GET HER?



I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, WILSON. I'LL HAVE TO FORGET IT... THAT LITTLE DEVIL!

FORGET HER! YOU'LL SOON BE OUT OF HERE, TOO. I ARRANGED FOR YOU TO HAVE THE BEST CARE...



HELLO! ARE YOU PART OF THE CURE? I FEEL BETTER ALREADY!

MR. WILSON HIRED ME, MR. PETERS. MY NAME IS MARY DELL...



COME ON, NOW! YOU'VE GOT TO GET WELL! I'M THE BOSS HERE!

I DON'T WANT TO GET BETTER IF IT WILL TAKE YOU AWAY!



LOVE CAME QUICKLY TO GREG PETERS... THE WARMTH OF IT FILLED HIS MIND AND HEALED HIS WOUNDED BODY... BEFORE MANY DAYS HAD PASSED HE COULD NO LONGER KEEP IT A SECRET...

BEFORE YOU GO TODAY, I'VE GOT TO TELL YOU, MARY... I'M DESPERATELY, COMPLETELY IN LOVE WITH YOU...

WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY ABOUT IT?

I KNEW... GO TO SLEEP, DEAR...







WHEN GREG WAS DISMISSED FROM THE HOSPITAL, HE TOOK MARY WITH HIM... NOT ONCE DID THE GYPSY CURSE CROSS HIS HAPPY MIND...

MARRIED SO SOON, GREG?

OF COURSE! WHY WAIT? I COULDN'T LOVE YOU MORE, AND YOU LOVE ME...



NOW WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO? YOU KNOW I HATE TO HAVE YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT!

I'VE GOT TO PICK UP SOME DRESSINGS AT THE DRUG STORE FOR YOUR BACK, DARLING.

MARY SOON RETURNED AND SHE CLUTCHED A NEWSPAPER IN HER TREMBLING HANDS... STRANGE THAT GREG DIDN'T RECALL THE CURSE THEN...



I GUESS MY BIG DREAM IS JUST A LAUGH AFTER ALL!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, MARY? WHAT'S WRONG? TELL ME...

YOU READ IT! HOPE CALDWELL TO WED GREG PETERS! AND WHY NOT? WHAT WOULD HE HAVE IN COMMON WITH A NURSE, WITH THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ACTRESS OF FILMLAND AT HIS BECK AND CALL!



YOU KNOW THAT'S A BLASTED LIE! SHE'D DO ANYTHING TO HURT ME! WE'RE GOING TO HER PLACE RIGHT NOW! I WANT YOU TO HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY TO HER!

OH, GREG... I HOPE IT IS A LIE...



I WANT TO PROVE THAT I LOVE YOU, MARY, AND THIS IS A GOOD WAY TO DO SO!

THIS IS SO UNPLEASANT! WHY DID IT HAVE TO HAPPEN TO US?



**H**OPE WAS ENTERTAINING GUESTS, BUT SHE INVITED HER VISITORS INTO A MORE PRIVATE ROOM. HER EYES WERE MOCKING IN SPIKE OF HER FEIGNED SURPRISE AT THE NEWSPAPER REPORT...



BUT YOU KNOW I NEVER LOVED YOU! TELL THAT TO MARY! I WANT HER TO HEAR IT FROM YOU!

WHY, GREG, DARLING! WHAT A TEMPER YOU'RE IN TODAY! AM I TO BLAME FOR A RUMOR ABOUT US?

**G**REG DIDN'T EVEN LOOK AT THE WEAPON HE CLUTCHED FOR... RAGE SEETHED WITHIN HIM, BLOTting OUT ALL JUDGMENT...



GREG! DON'T!

YOU SHE-DEVIL! I'LL KILL YOU!

O-DON'T!



MARY! MARY, SPEAK TO ME! WHAT HAVE I DONE? MARY—MARY...

HE STABBED HER!



I SAW IT! HE WAS LUNGING AT HOPE AND THAT GIRL JUMPED BETWEEN THEM! HE DIDN'T MEAN TO KILL HER... HE WAS GOING TO KILL HOPE!

MARY, DARLING! I LOVE YOU SO...

HELLO! POLICE...



IT ISN'T SO EASY TO LIVE WITH A DEAD HEART, IS IT, GREG PETERS?

LUCIA! THE CURSE! THE GYPSY'S CURSE... IT CAME TRUE! I KILLED MY LOVE, AND NOW I WILL NEVER KNOW PEACE AGAIN!

**G**REG WAS LED OFF TO PRISON TO SUFFER AN ENDLESS TORTURE... TIME WOULD EVENTUALLY BLOT OUT THE MEMORY OF THE GIRL HE LOVED AND KILLED BUT TO WHAT AVAIL, FOR HE WOULD NEVER ESCAPE THE PENALTY OF THE GYPSY'S CURSE...

*The End*



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